

# Major upsurge in Tanzania elephant poaching, says official

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Elephants forage in Tanzania's Serengeti national reserve on October 25, 2010

Tanzania has been hit by a sharp upsurge in poaching, with at least 60 elephants killed in the two months since the government was forced to halt a controversial crackdown, a senior official said.

This month Tanzania's President Jakaya Kikwete sacked four top ministers amid accusations that the anti-poaching drive—codenamed

'Operation Tokomeza', or 'Operation Terminate'—had led to security forces carrying out a wave of killings as well as torture and rape.

But Deputy Natural Resources and Tourism Minister Lazaro Nyalandu signalled that the draconian operation, in force during October, had at least resulted in a drop in poaching.

"During the entire period of the operation only two [elephants](#) were reportedly killed, while 60 were butchered between November 1 and December 28," the deputy minister said late Sunday.

He said the east African nation, home to the world famous Serengeti national park, would now approach foreign governments and institutions for help on how to proceed.

"Those to be approached include the European Union and Asian countries. Asian countries are reportedly main consumers of elephant tusks and by-products," Nyalandu said, adding that Tanzania's wildlife department and ranger service needed to be strengthened.

The anti-poaching operation saw the security forces operating under a shoot-to-kill policy and making sweeping arrests.



Police officers unpack pieces of smuggled elephant tusks from among a shipment of anchovies in Zanzibar on August 23, 2011

Poaching has risen sharply in Africa in recent years. Besides targeting rhinos, whole herds of elephants have been massacred for their ivory—threatening the tourism sector, a key foreign currency earner for Tanzania.

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